

## Richard Keith Call to Andrew Jackson, April 28, 1829, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### BRIGADIER-GENERAL RICHARD K. CALL TO JACKSON.

Tallahassee, Fla. , April 28, 1829.

. . . . I have read Dear General with great interest that part of your letter which relates to our friend Eaton, and hope sincerely that your impressions with regard to him may be correct. None would rejoice in the belief more than myself. You misunderstood me with regard to the person from whom I recd my information relative to the correspondence between Eaton and Timberlake. The Gentleman who gave this information is incapable of making a misstatement on any subject but he had recd it from one who said he had seen the papers. of this second person I know nothing, and he may have told a falsehood, I hope he did. I am sure Genl you cannot mistake my motives in mentioning this subject to you. I feel too deeply what ever concerns you not to speak when I believe you are imposed on, and I fear you are still deceived with regard to the Majors domestic relations. I do not wish to prejudice you against your friend, who I consider has one blemish and a thousand virtues. But I do believe Mrs. E is an unworthy associate for the ladies of your household. While living in the same house I had such evidences of her conduct, as to convince me of her want of virtue. You will pardon me Genl for speaking plainly to you on this subject. I do believe and I have the *most conclusive reason to believe* , that as early as 1824 an *agreement* existed between the parties that they would marry in the event of the death of T. This added to other circumstances which I mentioned to you have left me without a doubt on this subject. I wish it were otherwise, but the convictions of my mind are too strong to be removed. Your friends all believe this story, but they do you the justice to believe that you entertain a different opinion. Yours is certainly the most charitable

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belief, and one which I would embrace if I could. I do fear Genl that this Lady will create a difficulty among some of the members of your cabinet. I tell you in confidence and I think you will find me correct. She will not be recd. in the families of the other members of your Cabinet. But I have trespassed to long on your time. I hope your health is restored, and that the blessings of heaven may descend on you is the sincere prayer of your friend<sup>1</sup>

\* The following letters, dated at Washington, Apr. 8 and 9, 1829, from Eaton to Mrs. Emily Donelson, wife of Maj. A. J. Donelson, and head of Jackson's family in the White House, give a clear idea of the point to which the Eaton controversy had progressed at this time, and they also throw some light on Eaton's character:

“ *Mrs. Donelson*, I have understood that a certain family here, have gratuitously stepped forward to become your counsellors and advisers, to tell you what to do, and what not to do; and in secret whispers to slander all who are short of that standard of excellence which they deem the proper one. I have also learned amidst the variety of their gossiping tattle, that it has pleased this little nest of inquisitors, to offer some of their comments respecting me and my wife. I know not what effect they may have produced on your mind, tho I should presume, that some recent events which gave pain in your own bosom would lead you to forbear attaching any importance to tales of slander. If fire side whispers shall have influence on intelligent minds, it is questionable whether character be worth any thing. Under such an order of things, you yourself may presently become a victim to those meddling gossips.

“When your excellent aunt arrived here in 1815 (I have heard her tell the story) some of those busy folks, always and every where to be found, undertook to tell her of the people here; and amongst other things that a certain lady was not a proper character for her to associate with. Her answer as alike creditable to her head as to her heart was, ‘I did not come here, to listen to little slanderous tales, and to decide upon peoples character.’

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"You are young and uninformed of the ways and of the malice and insincerity of the world, therefore do I speak to you. You may take it for a certain rule that those whom you hear abusing others, will by and by when occasion offers, abuse you too. Let your Uncle from any cause get out of his place, and those butterflies who now infest you, will be amongst the first to find how entirely they have been deceived in you, and your character, and seek to reduce it to a level with their own. These people care nothing about you. They are eternally haunting your house, and bringing you tales and rules, only that your Uncle is in power, and they hope to give themselves consequence thro the smiles they may pick up in your doors. Rest assured one day or other you will have cause to repent that you ever recvd into your confidence such people as Mrs. Sim and Mrs. Graham, and some one or two others.

"Mrs. Sim like her husband is wholly underserving your confidence and you will after a while find it so. As for Mrs Graham I have uniformly contemned her, and ever shall. I believe she is despised by all who know any thing of her. I tell you as a friend, she deserves nothing of your friendship or confidence. If you regard your tranquility, hereafter forbear all intimacy and familiarity with such people; treat them politely; but never take them to your confidence. Were I a gossip I could point to some of these who have basely and falsely assailed *one* whom you had cause to love. Now they would be your gracious friends forsooth.

"Now Mrs Donelson take these hints and profit by them. Lay them by, and my life upon it, you will one day thank me for what I have said. You have known me long and well, and well know that in nothing have I ever deceived you or your friends. Appreciate therefore what is written friendly as it is intended; for your own benefit, not mine. Let your uncle get out of office, and I greatly mistake if you do not have cause to repent that ever you nestled to your bosom such friends and such councillors.

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"In this matter I have no concealment. What is here said is not in confidence. I am willing, more than willing, that those whose names are mentioned shall know it, that they may tell it to their husbands."

" *Mrs. Donelson*, Yesterday I wrote you a letter, which I sent by the messenger, and hope it has reached you. On looking to the Copy, I perceive there is omitted, one of the great objects of writing it; to ask you, if you felt entirely at liberty, to state to me, what were the remarks of Mrs Sim and Mrs Graham made in your presence. If what has been said (slanderosly) were made to you, under circumstances of privacy or confidence, in frendship to yourself I cannot ask that you shall violate that confidence; but if not, then have I to request, that you will disclose to me, what indeed it was. A letter from Dr. Sim utterly denying, any thing done, or said by his wife, is the reason why this application is made: it is merely for myself: your name shall not be used rest assured. Still I desire you to bring this request to the consideration of your husband, that he may decide if you can properly and with propriety afford me, what is requested. It is so farcical to me, to dream of madam Graham lecturing on *character*, that it constitutes an additional reason for pressing this request."

With the reply to these notes by Mrs. Donelson went a note by her husband to Eaton, Apr. 10, 1829, as follows:

" *Dear Sir*, Upon my return home last night from Genl Macomb's, Mrs Donelson shew me two letters, which you had addressed to her requesting a disclosure of the allegations against the character of Mrs Eaton and yourself supposed to have been raised by a family in this city. This request is doubtless based upon the impression, that Mrs D had given credence to these allegations, and of course the communication of them to you, was but an act of justice which you had a right to expect from her, and lest she may not have been explicit enough in the avowal of it, I have taken the liberty to accompany her note herewith enclosed, with this explanation.

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“And I take pleasure in adding as an individual that no one can be more ready than myself to pay to yourself and to Mrs Eaton every proper mark of respect, and by my example to recommend the sentiment which justifies it to my family.\* But beyond this my regard for them, and my duty to society does not require me to go. Upon this principle perceiving that the circle in which Mrs D had been accidentally thrown when she arrived in the city had embarrassed little her disposition to be social and free with your lady, I thought it better to rely on that corrective which I knew would be found in a longer acquaintance with society here, than on that which by seeking to oppose the sentiments of others, would have drawn her into endless disputes.”

\* From this point to the end the writing has been crossed out in the original. No trace of Mrs. Donelson's reply to Eaton has been found, but, as she held firmly out against Mrs. Eaton, it may be assumed that it was not complaisant. These three letters are from the Donelson Papers in the Library of Congress.

[ *Indorsement in Jackson's handwriting* :] This letter to be filed with my private papers, as an evidence of the falibility of man and how far he will be carried by his prejudices. There was not an act of Mrs. T. for the whole time I lived about the h[o]use of Major Oneal, with Genl Call, that created the slightest suspicion on my mind of the impressions of Genl. Call as now expressed by him, and I have been and ever will remain stedfast in the opinion of her innocence and the falshood of the charges A.J